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TIPS, TOOLS & INTELLIGENCE
FOR DEVELOPING TALENT



KEEPING YOUR CAREER ON TRACK

Susan A. Kaiden

atd

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

KEEPING YOUR CAREER ON TRACK



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If you were asked, “Where do you see yourself five years from now?” would you be able to answer the question? In today’s rapidly changing environment, it’s difficult to imagine what the world of work will look like in two years, much less five years down the road. In light of this uncertainty, it’s almost tempting to give up on career planning altogether.

But would you embark on an important journey without a destination? Or without any idea what you want to see or do when you arrive? Yet this is precisely how many of us approach our careers. We meander along the back roads without a plan and then wonder why we arrive at a destination that is not to our liking.

Don’t wait until you’re laid off, burned out, or unhappy in your current position before you consider where you want to go on your career journey. By conducting periodic inventories, both of yourself and of the job market, you can keep your career on course, despite any detours or road blocks that you may encounter along the way.

This *TD at Work* will help you to:

- Understand why you need a career road map.
- Identify what you have to offer employers.
- Clarify your preferred skills and work environment.
- Refine your career aspirations.
- Evaluate your strengths and identify any gaps.
- Develop an action plan.

WHY DO I NEED A CAREER ROAD MAP?

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else.”

—Yogi Berra

Gone are the days of climbing a career ladder at one company until you get your gold retirement watch. Instead, we face an evolving economy with accelerating technology, globalization, and business model disruptions that can change industries overnight and render occupations obsolete.

In fact, according to recent Department of Labor figures from a longitudinal study, younger Baby Boomers—individuals born from 1957 to 1964—held an average of 11.7 jobs from ages 18 to 48. And the evidence points to greater job mobility for younger workers, with many studies predicting that today’s workers will hold 14 or more jobs in their lifetimes and that more will rely on self-employment as a viable option.

During the past 10 years, many companies have eliminated employee career development programs in favor of a DIY model. While there is some evidence that this trend is reversing as the job market improves, it behooves you to take responsibility for your own career development. Using the tools in this *TD at Work* to map out a plan will help you stay abreast of changes in your field and identify any tune-ups or course corrections that might be necessary.

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER

“Take inventory of what you’re good at and extend out from your skills. Or determine what your customers need and work backward, even if it requires learning new skills.”

—Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon

Just as merchants need to take an inventory to know what wares they have to offer their customers, as an employee or a job seeker, you need to conduct a periodic inventory to identify what you have to offer employers. We’re not talking about your resume or the jobs you’ve held before, but a complete list of the skills, knowledge, and personality traits that contribute to who you are as a person. Job satisfaction is highest when you utilize your best skills doing something that interests and motivates you in a work environment that suits your personality.

Skills

Skills are the basic building blocks of what you know how to do. Skills are generally learned by doing and will improve over time as you hone your craft. The items that fall under this category should include proficiencies that you have

developed through training and experience that can be transferred from one company or industry to another.

As you develop your skills list, include both work-related and nonwork-related items. At this stage, don't concern yourself with how much you enjoy using these skills—identifying your preferences comes later in this process.

Knowledge

The next category to include in your personal inventory is knowledge. You may have acquired this knowledge at school, in a workshop, or on your own—perhaps, for example, through volunteering or individual study.

The difference between skills and knowledge is that knowledge is a subject that can be learned. You either know it or you don't know it. If you're a history teacher, for example, the skill is teaching and the knowledge is history. Additionally, knowledge can become outdated and need to be refreshed, while skills, if you continue to use them, usually get better with age.

JOB SATISFACTION IS HIGHEST WHEN YOU UTILIZE YOUR BEST SKILLS DOING SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS AND MOTIVATES YOU IN A WORK ENVIRONMENT THAT SUITS YOUR PERSONALITY.

Your knowledge list should contain any specialized technical or industry expertise that you have acquired. If you're a training and development professional, for instance, you might include specific e-learning tools or assessments that you have been trained to administer. Or if you've worked for many years in a specific industry and understand the terminology and issues facing companies in that space, make sure you incorporate that into this inventory. Add credentials under this heading as well, including any professional certifications or academic degrees that you hold, such as ATD's Certified Professional in Learning and Performance.

Finally, if there is a subject that personally fascinates you or a hobby about which you have a wealth of knowledge, include it here. It may not go on your resume, but this inventory should be a compendium of everything you have to offer, no matter how irrelevant it might seem at the moment.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND PERSONALITY TRAITS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The ATD Competency Model defines competencies as higher-level clusters of what someone needs to know and do to be successful. They're composed of measurable or observable skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors critical to successful job performance.

For the purpose of the exercises in this *TD at Work*, we are using skills, knowledge, and personality traits as simple categories to describe yourself. Because these exercises are for your personal use, how you categorize items—as skills, knowledge, or traits—is less important than understanding what you bring to the table.

Skills: Proficiencies developed through training or experience. A skill is something you know how to *do*.

Knowledge: Practical or theoretical understanding of a subject.

Personality Traits: Abilities, a natural capacity to perform certain activities, and behaviors; the way in which you act or conduct yourself. These tend to be more innate and not easily learned.

Personality Traits

The final category in a personal inventory involves your personality traits, or the sum of the qualities that describe who you are. These attributes generally are not learned and don't go away—you might find yourself prefacing them with "I am." Items to include in this section might be characteristics such as "detail-oriented," "creative," or "calm under pressure." To identify these traits, think about how your friends or colleagues describe you: "She's incredibly empathetic and kind" or "He's highly imaginative and thinks well on his feet."

If you have taken the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), DiSC, or another personality profile test, you may already have a list of words that you can use to describe yourself.

Table 1 gives an example of a completed personal inventory for a fictitious training and development professional whom we will call Tina Trainor. It lists her skills, knowledge, and personality traits. We will use Tina as an example throughout this *TD at Work* to illustrate how to use the various tools.

As you can see in the table, Tina has six years of experience as a training specialist. She started her career as a nurse and, after a few years on the job, was asked to provide training for the graduate nurses. Tina learned that she loved the role and decided to pursue a position in the training and development department. Last year, she completed the ATD Master Trainer Program to strengthen her skills and training credentials.

FIGURE 1: IDEAL CAREER

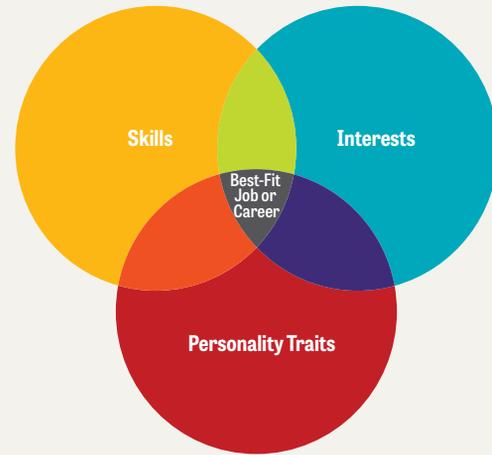


TABLE 1. PERSONAL INVENTORY: TINA TRAINOR

Skills and Experience	Knowledge and Credentials	Personality Traits
Examples: Teaching, Writing	Examples: History, Grants	Examples: Introverted, Detail-Oriented
<p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching/Instructing Group Facilitation Public Speaking/Presentation Skills Curriculum Development Developing Instructional Materials Needs and Audience Assessment Establishing Rapport and a Positive Classroom Environment Storytelling Role Playing Program Evaluation Networking <p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six Years—Training Specialist Four Years—Nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Learning Principles ADDIE and SAM Learning Models Learner-Centered Instructional Methods Individual Learning Modalities Group Dynamics Leadership Development Healthcare Industry Clinical Knowledge <p>Technical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WebEx/GoToMeeting PowerPoint Blackboard LMS Social Networks (LinkedIn, Facebook) <p>Degree: BS in Nursing</p> <p>Credential: ATD Master Trainer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extroverted Creative/Idea Person Enthusiastic/Positive Organized Collaborative Empathetic Good Sense of Humor Enjoy Variety and New Challenges <p>Personality Profiles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBTI (ENFJ) DiSC (High IS, Fairly High D)

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